

deliberate on that issue and not allow funding for our troops to become ensnarled in that national debate. The Democratic leader and I have begun discussions on the aspect of how we might address immigration. I do urge our colleagues to show restraint on this issue and on other issues that will clearly slow down this emergency spending bill.

Having said that, we will have a very busy week on the bill. We can expect full sessions and well into some evenings as we consider this legislation. I do thank my colleagues.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader is recognized.

U.S. CAPITOL POLICE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, before the Republican leader leaves the floor, I would like to say, through the Chair, that Senator FRIST and I were in his office when we were approached by the Sergeant at Arms about an incident in front of the Capitol. People were able to watch on national TV what took place. Parts of the building were evacuated.

The reason I mention this, without going into a lot of detail, is because of the great police force we have that takes care of the U.S. Capitol. They did work that was brilliant. I spoke to the Sergeant of Arms before we went into session. What they did to get ready to take that man down was extraordinary.

We have the finest trained police force anywhere in the country. I would put our men and women up against anyone else. They do such a wonderful job. I express my appreciation for the whole Senate for the work of the Sergeant at Arms and Chief Gainer. This is professionalism at its best.

What we do not see, of course, are the many times when they work off camera, when they do it late at night in various parts of this building where there are not a lot of people watching them.

Mr. President, again, I applaud and congratulate every member of our Capitol Police force.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—S. CON. RES. 25

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following the 5:30 p.m. vote today, the Senate then immediately proceed to consideration of S. Con. Res. 25; provided further, the Senate then proceed to a vote on adoption of the concurrent resolution, with no intervening action or debate, and no amendments in order to the resolution or preamble.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, am I recognized?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is recognized.

Mr. BYRD. I thank the Chair. Mr. President, my speech will probably need 40 minutes. I ask unanimous consent that I may utilize as much time as I need.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator is recognized.

Mr. BYRD. I thank the Chair.

THE GASOLINE CRISIS—A TIME FOR ACTION

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, in my home State of West Virginia and all across America, our people are frustrated and outraged with the soaring cost of gasoline.

The rising cost of gasoline means workers in West Virginia are seeing their paychecks dramatically reduced by the simple fact that they have to drive to get to work and to get back home. It is darned difficult and expensive for a coal miner to pay \$2.25 a gallon to drive his pickup truck to work on the two-lane, hilly, winding roads of West Virginia.

Noting that West Virginians have become "hawkish about watching gas prices," the Charleston, WV, Gazette of March 11, 2005, pointed out that they "have few mass transportation options, travel farther to work, and often traverse [much] more rugged terrain."

Automobiles are essential for West Virginians to get to work. According to Census data, although West Virginia is a relatively small State, workers in West Virginia spend more time commuting to work than the national average.

Mr. President, 86 percent of West Virginians use cars or trucks to get to work, and nearly 75 percent of West Virginians commute by themselves in

their pickup trucks and other such vehicles.

The percentage of people in West Virginia who own a pickup truck is almost double the national average. Nearly one-third of West Virginians must travel outside their home county to get to work. Let me say that again. Nearly one-third of West Virginians must travel outside their home county to get to work, a figure that is 17 percent above the national average, and an average West Virginian drives more miles—now get this—the average West Virginian drives more miles each year than average Americans throughout the rest of the country.

The point is this: West Virginians rely on their cars and their pickup trucks to keep West Virginia working. Large, rugged vehicles are not an expensive luxury for workers in West Virginia and in many other rural States, and anyone who has tried to navigate the narrow, uphill climbs of West Virginia's mountains by weaving around corners, constantly slowing, constantly accelerating and stopping and starting knows the need for these rugged vehicles and, regrettably, the cost of fueling them.

Imagine navigating that kind of terrain not only to work but also in getting children to school, as well as to the grocery store.

The frustration and the outrage of West Virginians paying \$25, \$30, and \$45 just to gas up is certainly understandable.

Family budgets already strained by the rising costs of health insurance, the rising costs of college tuition, and other everyday expenses are being stretched even thinner by these record-breaking gasoline prices in West Virginia. West Virginia's small businesses depend on deliveries. Floral shops, pizza parlors, produce shippers, taxi companies, construction and remodeling businesses, plumbers, electricians, landscapers are finding it harder to make ends meet. Many are going out of business.

I recently read of an independent trucker who lives and works in Norfolk, VA, telling the Christian Science Monitor that last year she paid more than \$250 a week for fuel, and that was making her life as a single parent very difficult. She was even forced to decide between paying a doctor bill for her child or buying new tires for her truck. Guess who lost. "My truck lost," she explained.

Today's record high gasoline prices in West Virginia are affecting literally everyone from commuters, consumers, and businesses to public and private agencies. Meals on Wheels programs are having trouble delivering meals. Think of it. Local governments already straining to pay for essential services in these days of cutbacks in Federal assistance are simply overwhelmed in their efforts to keep schoolbuses, police cars, firetrucks, and other city and county vehicles in operation. What a shame.

The damage is devastating and is everywhere. Last year, polling data showed that more than half of the American people said the rising cost of gasoline had been hard on them financially while more than a third said it had caused them serious problems. U.S. consumer confidence fell for a third month in March, and this is being attributed to the cost of gasoline. It is awful. It is terrible.

At one time, inflation was called the cruelest tax. Soaring energy costs are the ecumenical tax. Did everyone get that? Soaring energy costs are the ecumenical tax. Why? They tax everyone with a car or a truck—everyone, regardless of race, sex, age, occupation. Low-income workers are being hit the hardest, however, as they usually have to travel the farthest to work because of the need for affordable housing. They have less access to mass transportation. One can understand that when they look at those mountains in West Virginia. And they drive older, less fuel-efficient vehicles.

As the American people cry out for help in this current crisis, what do they do? They look to Washington for action. The White House's response to this outcry has been to moan and groan about the failure of Congress to pass its so-called energy plan and recycle old legislation.

When it comes to dealing with today's energy mess, the White House is out of gas. For three Congresses, an energy bill has clanged about Washington like Marley's ghost. The administration's national energy policy has been drafted by special interests, ironed out behind closed doors now and presented as a *fait accompli* for Members to support, take it or leave it. But the national energy policy in its totality would do little to seriously address our energy needs now or in the long term.

The only major provisions that might provide tangible progress are the energy tax incentives, but these, too, could be a mirage as the President's proposed fiscal year 2006 budget only provides \$6.7 billion over the next 10 years for all energy incentives, only about a third of what was provided 2 years ago in the Senate Energy bill. Analysis by the Department of Energy's own Energy Information Administration, EIA, of the Energy bill of the 108th Congress has clearly shown that the bill would have a negligible impact on increasing production, reducing consumption, lowering imports, or affecting energy prices. Now, take that home for dinner.

Furthermore, this administration actually significantly slashes funding for oil and gas research programs. Like its agricultural policies, the administration's energy policy promises the American people a rose garden. It ruminates with much rhetoric but then fails to fertilize with funding.

While the White House has failed to propose any serious policy options or take any action to remedy the current crisis, I am suggesting that it is time—

it is time, I say to the White House—to get serious. It is time that this Nation makes the necessary investments so we can reduce our dependence on foreign oil.

What does this mean? It means getting the next generation of vehicles on the road. It means investing in fuels that can be made from domestically secure sources such as agricultural residues and through coal gasification. It means investments in building. It means upgrading our refining and pipeline infrastructure in order to move our petroleum products to market.

At the end of the day, it requires that we set our sights on the goal of getting off foreign oil. Senator BINGAMAN sent a letter to the Secretary of Energy and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency in April 2004. That letter laid out 13 concrete actions that President Bush could take to respond to high gasoline prices. I concurred with many of these recommendations in a letter to the President myself in May 2004. However, this administration has not followed through on any of these suggestions.

Right now, more than ever, what we need are not only long-term policies but also near-term programs and actions that address the immediate problem. For one thing, as the great British economist John Maynard Keynes reminded us, "In the long run we are all dead."

I am also reminded of the response that an aide to President Franklin Roosevelt gave when asked why the administration was acting so quickly and forcefully at the time to put people back to work during the dark days of the Great Depression—I lived in them—when in the long run market forces would eventually do it. The aide, Harry Hopkins, snapped: People do not eat in the long run. They eat every day.

While we do need long-term energy policies to reduce our dependency on foreign energy, we still drive cars every day during the dark days of these soaring gasoline prices. American workers, American consumers, and American small businesses suffer because of the failure of their Government to provide short-term relief.

Here are some suggestions which might provide assistance. The White House could direct the Secretary of Energy to suspend the delivery of oil to the Strategic Petroleum Reserve until market conditions improve. We might consider liberalizing the vehicle depreciation allowance to assist workers who daily commute more than 30 miles one way to work, and \$15.5 billion in targeted tax incentives over the next 10 years, including \$2 billion to deploy advanced clean coal technologies, would help to strengthen the economy, enhance our Nation's energy resources, promote an array of advanced energy technologies and increase jobs while promoting a healthy government.

Yes, we can do more. We can do plenty. We need an investigation into what is going on and why the people in West

Virginia and other States are getting squeezed, why the people in West Virginia and other States are getting gouged, when huge oil companies are enjoying recordbreaking profits. I call on the White House to direct the Federal Trade Commission to review whether speculations in the futures market may be playing a role in driving up gasoline prices. I call for a congressional investigation to ascertain the role of oil companies in setting the steep price that West Virginians and people in other rural States pay at the pump.

Finally, I urge the White House to stop wimping out and to confront OPEC. Press these oil-producing countries to increase oil supply to help stabilize global prices. While running for the Presidency, George Bush promised to get tough with OPEC, especially the Saudis. Now, Mr. President, is the time to do it.

The White House should work on rehabilitating its own weak, creaky spine which has kept it from playing hardball with the foreign countries that sell us most of our oil. In his book, "Plan of Attack," Bob Woodward reported that Saudi Arabia offered to fine-tune oil prices in the months before the 2004 Presidential election. Why not use the bully pulpit now to call for increased oil production? Why not dispatch the Secretary of State to OPEC countries to twist arms and knock heads together to get an increase in oil production? Why does the White House remain silent, as silent as a stone, when OPEC announces, as it did on March 30, that it had ruled out an increase in oil production? Why does the administration hold its tongue when Middle Eastern potentates collude to separate working Americans from their hard-earned dollars?

Instead of reading headlines about tough administrative action to reduce oil prices, we read of scandals about lucrative billion-dollar, no-bid contracts for Iraqi oil fields. Instead of lowering prices at the pump in the USA, less than 18 months ago the White House asked Congress to approve \$900 million in taxpayer money to send more gasoline to filling stations. Where? Baghdad.

The President might not have a short-term energy strategy for the United States, but he has a great one for Iraq. The only problem is that the American people are paying for it twice, once on April 15, the day our income taxes are due, and once again on every trip to the filling station.

I yield back the remainder of my time. I yield the floor and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.